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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Letter dated 30 November 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request you to circulate as a document of the General Assembly the text of this letter and the annexed corrected text of the Tunis Declaration, as adopted at the conclusion of the African regional meeting held in Tunis from 2 to 6 November 1992 in preparation for the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights. The Declaration was previously circulated as document A/C.3/47/7.

(Signed) Hamadi KHOUINI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

TUNIS DECLARATION

The Ministers and representatives of the African States meeting in Tunis from 2 to 6 November 1992 in preparation for the World Conference on Human Rights and pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/116,

Considering the importance of the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights, which is being held at a time marked by major changes in international relations and on the eve of a new international order,

Considering the increasingly privileged position being given to the protection and promotion of human rights among the concerns of the international community, and convinced that the dumping of toxic waste in Africa is a violation of the collective rights of the peoples of Africa,

Taking note with satisfaction of the advance made in enacting human rights provisions and of the progress accomplished in applying them throughout the world,

Recognizing, however, that there are both endogenous and exogenous difficulties which delay or impede the satisfactory implementation of human rights on a global scale,

Considering that one of the main objectives of the World Conference on Human Rights is precisely to identify these difficulties and advocate measures to be taken nationally and internationally to overcome them,

Aware of the importance of the debates which will take place during the World Conference on Human Rights and of the impact of the resulting conclusions on the direction of future United Nations activities in the field,

Desiring to contribute to the success of the World Conference and to share African concerns with the international community in the field of the promotion of human rights and development,

Have adopted this Declaration entitled the Tunis Declaration, which reflects their convictions as well as their expectations:

1. The African States reaffirm their commitment to the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two International Covenants on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

2. The universality of human rights is unquestionable; their protection and promotion constitute a duty for all States without regard to their political, economic or cultural system;

3. The administration of justice and the independence of the judiciary are essential for the effective exercise of human rights. However, that goal cannot possibly be achieved without a substantial effort to further the administration of justice. The African States and the international community must therefore devote more resources to this area;

4. Responsibility for the implementation and promotion of human rights rests primarily with Governments. The institutions, organizations and structures that constitute society also have an important role to play in safeguarding and publicizing those rights and therefore deserve to be strengthened and encouraged;

5. Respect for human rights is undeniably a matter of international concern and a goal to the attainment of which all States, without exception, are called upon to contribute. No preconceived model, however, can be prescribed on a universal scale, for the historical and cultural realities of each nation and the traditions, standards and values of each people cannot be disregarded;

6. The principle of the indivisibility of human rights is sacrosanct. Civil and political rights cannot be dissociated from economic, social and cultural rights. None of those rights occupies a privileged position vis-à-vis the others;

7. Political freedom, unless accompanied by respect for economic, social and cultural rights, remains precarious;

8. The right to development is inalienable;

9. Human rights, development and international peace are interdependent;

10. Lasting progress towards the implementation of human rights requires effective development policies at the national level, more equitable economic relations at the international level, and a favourable economic environment;

11. Racial discrimination, especially in its new forms, extremism and religious, racial or any other kind of fanaticism, pose a serious threat to the protection and promotion of the universal values of human rights, and Governments, individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations are called upon to make efforts, take the necessary measures and cooperate in order to meet this threat;

12. Africa, which has embarked upon the path of democracy, economic reform and the promotion of human rights in an unfavourable international environment, and which finds itself particularly exposed to internal tensions arising out of the failure to satisfy the essential needs of the people and the rise of extremism, will nevertheless continue to uphold its choices and to fulfil its responsibilities, and calls upon the international community to fulfil its own, especially through the strengthening of international solidarity, an adequate increase in development aid and an appropriate settlement of the debt problem;

13. Africa, which remains committed to individual rights, at the same time reaffirms the importance it attaches to respect for the collective rights of peoples. For that reason, it condemns the persistence of apartheid in South Africa, and the flagrant and systematic violations of human rights as a result of foreign occupation, for example in Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, armed conflicts in Somalia, and the policy of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it reaffirms the right of all nations to self-determination and to the free choice of their political and economic systems and institutions on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.